NatureKenya, The EANHS *Action for Biodiversity Conservation*

Newsletter

NATIONAL MUSEUMS OF KENYA
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Celebrating 90 Years

FEBRUARY, 1999

Membership

487 Members
(at time of print)

A big THANK YOU to all of you who have renewed your subscription and to those who went even further and convinced friends, colleagues and acquaintances to join.

The newsletter will keep you updated on membership numbers. Keep a look out also for our Long Crested Eagle logo, which will illustrate our progress towards our goal of 2000 members as more and more of it will be completed.

If you have not renewed please take a moment now! If everyone does their bit we should be able to complete our logo in no time.

More you can do!
Can you think of two people or organisations that would be interested to join Nature Kenya? Please fill out the enclosed slip and the office will send them subscription material.

Remember the more members we have the stronger and more effective is the Society in advocacy, education and awareness.

ACTIVITIES

90 Anniversary Celebrations

Thursday 25 March, 5:30 P.M. outside the Louis Leakey Auditorium, NMK.

This date marks the inaugural meeting of East Africa Natural History Society members in 1909.

Come reminisce with different speakers, cut our 90th birthday cake, and weather permitting whirl to a few golden oldies.

Put this into your diaries right away – you will not want to miss this event!

We shall have a vehicle available for members who need a ride to town.

Wednesday Morning Birdwalks: Bird-watching walks at sites in and around Nairobi. Meet at the National Museum car park every Wednesday at 8:45 am. Return about 12:30 p.m.

Video: MAKAYA – COASTAL SACRED FORESTS

Monday 8 February, 5:45 p.m. at the Louis Leakey Auditorum.

Quentin Luke, working with the National Museums Coastal Forest Conservation Unit, will introduce and take questions on the video.

The video is on sale at the Society office and will be available on the night for 1000/-.

Tea is served from 5:15 pm.

'The Life of Birds' NEW David Attenborough Series

The Ornithology Department will be screening an episode of the magnificent new David Attenborough series 'The Life of Birds' each Wednesday afternoon over the next two months. These video presentations are for Ornithology staff but Nature Kenya members are welcome to attend. All videos will be shown in the Natural Sciences Seminar Room from 2-3 p.m.

PROVISIONAL PROGRAMME:

3 February -'To fly or not to fly'
10 February- 'The mastery of flight'
17 February -'The insatiable appetite'
24 February - 'Meat-eaters'

3 March - 'Fishing for a living'
10 March - 'Signals and songs'
17 March - 'Finding partners'
24 March - 'The demands of the egg'
31 March - 'The problems of parenthood'
7 April - 'The limits of endurance'

Ornithology Department Research Seminar

Wednesday 27 January, 15:00 in the Natural Sciences seminar room

Dr Vita Wright (Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute, Montana, USA)

"Habitat use and conservation of the migratory Flammulated Owl"

Dr David Schirokauer (Earthwatch Institute, USA)

"Grizzly Bears in Glacier National Park: estimating population size from DNA fingerprints"

All are welcome!

EXCURSIONS

Pot Luck Outings
Bird-watching outings held on every third Sunday of the month, *i.e.* 21 February. Bring a picnic lunch, binoculars, field guides, *etc.* and meet at 9:00 am at the National Museum car park. Those attending decide on the venue - hence "Pot Luck".

Trip to Masai Mara Friday 26 - Sunday 28 February. The response from members was excellent and the trip is almost fully booked. However we still have one more space in the minivan. Interested? Call today!

To those members booked, the trip remains as scheduled.

Trip to Lake Elementaita Lodge Ranch on Saturday 20 March. Leaves the Museum car park at 0800hrs. Bring water, packed lunch, good walking shoes and binoculars. To sign up contact the EANHS office. Anticipated entry fee to the ranch is 300/-.

Members from Naivasha, Nakuru and Njoro, **first**, let us know you are coming (mail or email), and meet us at the ranch!

OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

Easter at Marich Pass

Friday 2- Wednesday 7 April

The Marich Pass is a deep, rocky cleft carved where the Moruny river emerges from the Cherangani Hills onto the dry plains of the Lake Turkana Basin.

Two kilometres from here is the Marich Pass Field Studies Centre (MPFSC) from where this safari will be based. All meals and overnights will be at MPFSC.

Marich Pass is at an altitude of 3000ft. Birdlife in the area is prolific and in early April, migration of palearctic species should be at its peak. Elephants are also regular visitors.

Travel to Marich Pass. It is 520 kms from Nairobi to MPFSC, about 8 - 9 hours drive.

We would like to keep the itinerary as flexible as possible as there is so much that can be done from Marich Pass. Rather than an itinerary we list the activities we anticipate for our trip.

- ✓ Ethnobotany and birdwalks.
- ✓ Visit local homesteads, visit traditional markets or even try gold panning.
- ✓ Whole day walk to the dome of Koh up the Cherangani Hills
- ✓ Hill walk to rock shelters and caves and up Mt Mtelo.
- ✓ Visit the Turkwell Gorge hydro - electric project 50 kms from the centre.
- ✓ Picnic lunch at the Nasalot National Reserve which is enroute to the Gorge and is home to a variety of bush game, including elephant, buffalo, lion and antelopes. Entry fee about 100/- per person.
- ✓ Drive 35 kms to the South Turkana National Reserve in dry and rugged hill northeast of the Centre, domain of Turkana herders. Entry fee unknown.
- ✓ Visit the Irrigation Schemes of the Wei Wei Valley about 45 minutes drive from the Centre.

Accommodation at the Centre varies from bandas to dormitories and camping with rates varying accordingly. Facilities available include clean drinking water, latrines, showers, firewood. Mattresses and blankets are also provided. Lighting is by kerosene lamps.

Members should come prepared for a variety of weather conditions. You should have mosquito repellant although mosquitos are not a serious problem at Marich. Also sunglasses, sun cream and hat as there is intense sunlight.

Fuel is avaiable from Sigor, 7 kms from the Centre. Although we will travel in convoy, directions will be available to all participants. Road conditions are good.

Costs for the 5 nights:
Inclusive of meals
Per person sharing banda: 4800/-
Per person in dormitory: 4200/-
Per person camping: 3800/-
Minivan per person: 5,250/-
Minimum 16 persons

MUSEUMS AND MUSEUM SITES

With presentation of the Society membership card, members benefit from free entry to Museums and sites of the National Museums of Kenya that are open to the public.

This month we begin to profile these museums and sites.

Jumba la Mtwana

Located 20 kilometres north of Mombasa, this site represents the remains of a 13 century Swahili settlement. Abandoned about a hundred years after its foundation, Jumba still contains standing remains of domestic houses, mosques and tombs. The domestic houses are rich in carved vidaka (or niches) and arched doors, forming part of the decorative motifs.

James Kirkman first excavated the site in the 1970's. A National Museum team led by George Abungu carried out several small scale excavations and made a comprehensive survey of the site in 1991.

Located on a beautiful stretch of sandy beach where marine turtles nest, Jumba is a popular picnic venue for residents and tourists alike.

Access to Jumba is easiest by car. After passing Mtwapa trading centre along the main Mombasa - Malindi road, there is a large sign indicating a turn-off to the right; from there, you follow a dirt road for about three kilometres until reaching the site.

There is a small site museum exhibiting some archaeological finds, as well as local corals. There is a space for camping, as well as shower and toilet facilities. Cold sodas are available at the ticket office.

There is a nominal charge for those wanting only access to the beach for picnics.

SUBCOMMITTEES

FRIENDS OF THE NAIROBI ARBORETUM:

February 27, 10 a.m - 4 p.m. - Wind in the Trees Concert. All are Welcome!

March 8 at 5:15 p.m - FONA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING will be held at the Louis Leakey Auditorium at the National Museum.

Arboretum guided Tree Walks on the last Monday of every month i.e. 22 February from 9:30 a.m. Meet at the new FONA offices beside the Girl Guides HQ.

SUCCULENTA:

Sunday, 7 February at 2:00 p.m. Visit to Olga and Norman Gatarayiha's succulent nursery and private plant collection. Meet up at Jackie McConnell's car park at No.76 Dagoretti Road (0.5 kms from Karen roundabout). We will leave at 2:10 p.m. sharing transport. After the visit we will return to Jackie's garden to see her Namibian succulenta and have tea. Contributions for tea will be welcome.

Saturday, 6 March at 2:00 p.m. Plant and book sale at Maria Dodd's house, No. 84 Nandi Road, Karen (on left hand side from the Ngong Road end). Price your own plants - about 10% going to the society. Please start bagging your plants now. We hope to have a guest speaker. Please bring contributions for tea.

ARABUKO SOKOKE (COAST)

Forest walks every last Wednesday of the month i.e. 24 February. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the Gede Forest Station, on the Mombasa - Malindi Road.

BIRD WALKS on the first Saturday of each month ie. 6 February. Starting at 6:30 a.m. from the Gede Forest Station, these birdwalks are organised by the Arabuko Sokoke Forest Guides Association.

SOCIETY NOTICES

WIN GUIDE BOOKS TO ARABUKO SOKOKE FOREST AND KAKAMEGA FOREST

Find a name for this newsletter and you could win two excellent guide books.

Please limit your entries to two only. You may send your entries by mail, fax or email but **not by phone.**

Selection will be done by the marketing committee of the society.

Reporting on the Waterbird Counts

The 1999 January waterbird counts are in progress.

At Manguo, Limuru, Afrotropical Ducks and Geese were recorded in high numbers, over 500. In lakes Bogoria and Nakuru, flamingos were the most abundant. Lake Bogoria had the highest number of Flamingos, over 1.07 million. Lake Nakuru recorded a lower number of flamingos compared with the previous counts, 12,257.

Get The Newsletter By Email By Sending The Office Your Email Address.

We apologise for the late delivery of the October newsletter and Ballya. The Post Office regrets all the inconvenience .

NEWS FLASH

WORLD BIRDWATCH 1999

Saturday 2 & Sunday 3 OCTOBER

From Finland to Ecuador, Hong Kong to Ghana, people will taking part.

Kenya participants -all volunteers - will be leading walks at Important Bird Areas, and trying to get a long list of species for the weekend.

We need you to participate in any of the following ways: by going out and seeing the birds, leading the bird walks or raising funds for transport and food.

We also request donations of binoculars, bird books and slide projectors for the IBA sites.

In 1997 our efforts in Kenya resulted in the highest list worldwide with 781 species, and collected locally over 300,000/- for printing a bird guide for schools.

So look out for future correspondence on this event - you'll want to be part of the action!

IN THE NEWS

Protests at coral harvest

Environmental lobby groups in Malindi ...protested at the heavy destruction of corals by foreign investors licensed to export live aquarium corals to Europe.

The lobby groups asked Malindi DC Claire Omolo, the Kenya Wildlife Service and the Fisheries Department to propose cancellations of the licences.

More than 100 workers have been hired by the companies owned by Italians to break and pack more than four tonnes of corals for export every day off Malindi, Watamu and Mambrui coastline.

Daily Nation, 9 January 1999

IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS (IBAs)

New groups join the IBA's chain of site support groups at Lake Victoria and Mt. Kenya. They are the following:

1. Lake Victoria Sunset Birders, c/o WCK Kisumu, Mr. Mkala, Box 4201, Kisumu. Tel: 035 42952
2. Burguret Youth for Conservation, c/o Chairman, Martin Maina, Box 169, Naro Moru

TROPICAL BIOLOGY ASSOCIATION

This is your chance to join a great training programme!

Each year, TBA organises the popular one-month long courses: 'Darwin Field Courses in Tropical Ecology and Conservation'. This year, three courses are set for Kibale forest, Uganda and Amani, Tanzania. The courses take place between June and September. Applicants must be first degree holders (biological Sc.), persons currently undertaking their MSc or actively involved in biological field research. African applicants can apply for a scholarship. What is more, TBA will enroll all future African participants as EANHS members for three years after completion of their courses!

Hurry now and send in your application ...letter of intent, CV and two confidential references to the society. Deadline is on 20 Feb '99.

BUSH CRAFT

Wood ash is an effective deterrent against safari ants. Surround tents with it. A dribble of paraffin is also effective.

AAR SUPPORTS THE EAST AFRICA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

BIRD HOTLINE 749957/ eanhs@africaonline.co.ke

BIRD OF THE MONTH

Great Crested Grebe reported by Geoffrey Irvine and Gary Fredricks, LAKE ELEMENTAITA/ Dec.

Western Reef Heron, Carmine Bee-eaters, GITHURAI, NAIROBI, Onesmas Kahindi/ Jan.

Abyssinian Roller, Carmine Bee-eaters, Magpie Starling, LAKE BARINGO, Willis Okech/ Dec.

Black-tailed Godwit, LAKE NAIVASHA, Moez Ali/ Jan.

Eurasian Wryneck, LAKE NAKURU, Eric Harris/Jan.

Please send unusual sightings to 'Kenya Birds' where if accepted they are published with full reference.

FEBRUARY DIARY

Wed 3 Birdwalk

Sat 6 Arabuko Sokoke birdwalk

Sun 7 Succulenta visit to nursery

Mon 8 Makaya Video

Wed 10 & 17 Birdwalk

Sun 21 Pot Luck Outing

Mon 22 Tree Walk

Wed 24 Nairobi Birdwalk and Arabuko Sokoke forest walk

Fri 26 - Sun 28 Trip to Masai Mara

Sat 27 Wind in the Trees Concert

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